



INSIDE:
DE LA SOUL

**MY BLOODY
VALENTINE**

FRONT 242

**EDWARD
WILKERSON,
JR.**

6104-YS
NEW YORK



WHPK MAGAZINE

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If you are from Chicago and you haven't heard of **Edward Wilkerson, Jr.** one way or another, don't worry — you aren't alone. Chicago is often cited as the home of the pre-success story. From Benny Goodman to Anthony Braxton, Chicago has literally had a hard time of holding its own. Wilkerson, however, stands as an exceptional exception; he is Chicago's own hard-luck fortune.

Wilkerson is one of the hottest up-and-coming saxophonists and composers around. Like many noted contemporary jazz musicians, Wilkerson is a protégé of the Association for the Advancement of Creative Music (AACM). During his years as an undergraduate at The University of Chicago in the early '70s, Wilkerson studied at the AACM school on the South Side.

To put it mildly, Wilkerson is a musical busybody, working with four bands composed of almost all Chicago area musicians. Two of them are of substantial size: the octet **Eight Bold Souls** and a 25-piece big band, **Shadow Vignettes**. The other two are more or less collaborative projects: one, a nameless quartet and the other, a trio, the **Ethnic Heritage Ensemble**, with Kahil El Zabar and Joseph Bowie. In 1987, after failing to secure a record contract on a major label, Wilkerson started his own label, Sessoms Records. (As if writing music for an eight-piece and a 25-piece band weren't enough.) His first two albums, "Eight Bold Souls" and "Birth of a Notion", received critical and uncritical acclaim. His trials and travails were recently the subject of a documentary film entitled "Birth of a Notion", by Chicago filmmaker Floyd Webb. It is to be screened this November.

Despite his hard work and awesome playing, Wilkerson has avoided the exalted status of a media darling. Perhaps he is kept out of the limelight because his music, which is a distinct mix of funk, fun and flat-out wailing, is not accompanied with any press release pretentiousness about the nature of jazz etc. etc. Aside from whatever reason, Wilkerson, if anything, should be applauded for his determination to heat up and magnetize Chicago, making it more than simply that toddlin' town.

This interview was conducted by **WHPK's Hamza Walker**.

Hamza: How is it touring with a 25-piece band?

Ed: When we did the Flat Earth Tour in Wisconsin, Ohio, and back here again [in the spring of 1988], we had 30 people, including the crew. It's a real challenge.

CHICAGO'S HARD-LUCK FORTUNE

Organizationally I was dealing on another level. You can get swamped. I had to move so much equipment that I couldn't move my arms when it came time to conduct the band. I've learned a lot from Don Moye [the percussionist from the Art Ensemble of Chicago]. He has given me a lot of valuable advice. I went over to their office and they've got computers. They're *smoking*. Fax machines goin' and what not. It's like *network central*. They've got an ability to apply what they do in music to the organizational end. They set a certain level of excellence.

Hamza: Seems like you've been getting some press, what with interviews in Downbeat, Option and the Atlantic.

Ed: Interviews always surprise me. I've been doing interviews, but it doesn't translate into money or work. Being from Chicago, it's harder to make that translation.

Hamza: You're pretty firm about staying in Chicago?

Ed: Yeah. I like Chicago. I'm originally from Cleveland. So this is the *big city*. They have tall buildings and women with painted lips. I ain't never seen nothin' like this. Nothin' over 5 stories high and we've got stop lights in Cleveland where you have to wait until the cows go by. I'm just joking. I've been here since 1971. Chicago is a great base. L.A. is too slow and New York is too fast. New York is a constant struggle, a constant undertaking, but you get visibility and the audience there is more exposed. The audiences here are getting more sophisticated. I guess it doesn't matter where you're based anymore. Just jump on a plane. Where does Archie Shepp live? Nobody knows. If there is a gig, he just shows up. Chicago has a real spiritual base, a real solid black community. You can't find an

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HARD-LUCK

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

expanse of black people like you do on the South Side of Chicago, miles and miles. It's a real center and I get a lot of support from them and that's important.

Hamza: What's in store for Sessoms Records?

Ed: There are supposed to be record agents out East who are going to check out the Souls to see if we are vinyl-worthy. Have to see what happens in time. Sessoms started out because I was shunned by so many record companies. I don't want to be a mogul in the industry or anything, but I just couldn't get a deal. I think that people out East feel as though they can't promote things out of Chicago. I don't know why. I might have to keep Sessoms going and become a giant in the industry.

But I've learned a lot from starting up my own label. Sometimes the whole business end gets discouraging. As long as people have money to survive, then I guess things are okay. But nobody ever seems to make any money, which is fine as long as people can survive and enjoy their lives. I'm just trying to get by and

progress real slowly. Some of these guys have made real sacrifices for music in the past. It's a shame to see them unable to enjoy their lives and as they get older, they become bitter about ever having tried to make music. I don't want to be like that. Things have to get to a point where you've got to be able to make a living at it to be good and avoid that type of situation. When that begins to happen, the music takes on a better shape. There won't be any bitterness or frustration. That has a beauty too. It's another type of thing. It reflects the way people feel. But there are a lot of young dudes out there who are making their own paths. I get a lot of inspiration from them and I hope they get the same from me. I hope to really try and make my mark in music without having to sacrifice those really serious things like your life and family. You don't find too many people who are willing to sacrifice something to play music. You don't say you are going to sacrifice your life to become a postman or a welder. It's a rare and special thing when someone says they are going to sacrifice something for music. Commitment to music is special.

My ideal is to do concerts and not take any money at the door. I'm just going to ask that they donate some food. Invite me to dinner or something. I'll have a big calendar at the door where you set

the date. Ed is coming over for dinner on such and such date. I don't want to have anything to do with money. Someday I'll say I need a set of tires and someone will donate a set of tires or someone is unemployed but they can fix my sink. They will get in free. I would like it to be all barter. I'll set up a scale at the door and you can bring five pounds of something. Just drop by with a can of peas.

Hamza: Or a goat.

Ed: Don't do that because I can't cook, and I'm tired of eating in restaurants. If I eat in another restaurant, I might kill myself. It would be great if we could get rid of this money thing. People could give what they've got.

Hamza: On another note, how did you find your years at the University of Chicago?

Ed: I really enjoyed it. A lot of people, a lot of black students said it was the worst time of their life. I didn't go there looking for a social life. It exposed me to a completely different side of music and I still appreciate that. At the same time, I was studying at the AACM. It was valuable exposure. I wish the music department would expand a little bit. But I appreciated it for what it was. It's staunchly in its own mode, which is to say "living a life of the mind", but there should be a couple of schools like that.

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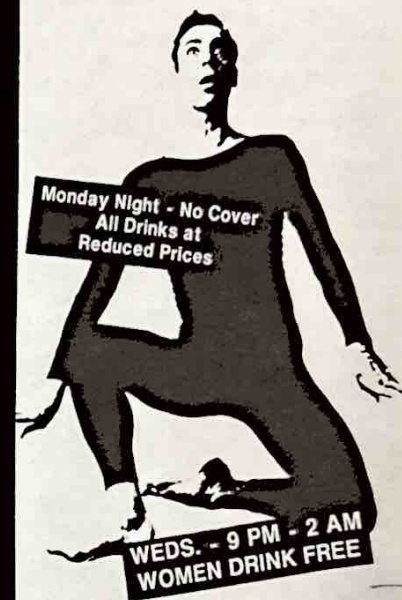
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WRIGHTWOOD

Belgian band Front 242 (Wax Trax!) is enjoying a revival in popularity, riding on the coattails of the newest dance crazes. With the rush to categorize all electronic manipulations and turntable wizardry, from acid house to deep garage, the press neatly packaged Front 242 into the New Beat movement. But Front 242 can point to their long history with peers like Nitzer Ebb and Ministry. Patrick Codenys of the band spoke to WHPK's Mark Ferguson, along with Andrew Chassacarrillo, about living in the 20th century.

Mark: The name Front 242 is from the United Nations Resolution [which states, among other things, that Israel should exchange land appropriated during the 1967 war for peace, and calls for recognition of Palestinians as refugees]. Why did you choose that resolution?

Patrick: First, the "242" is not from the Resolution. It's just an accident. In fact, Front 242 doesn't mean anything. It's just a code number: the "242" is a serial number and the "Front" means something really compact and you can also say the word in other languages. We had a more commercial idea about the name, like Coca-Cola and Adidas—it's just a name with no significance.

Mark: One intriguing aspect about your work is that while you take a certain stance in the presentation of your music, you also have the beats per minute listed on the cover, which tends to distract attention from the song and instead focus on its danceability. What are your thoughts on that?

Patrick: It depends. We think that the title of the song is giving information about the atmosphere of the song, or its subject. And beats per minute is just the dancefloor side of the song, because we consider that every song could be played on the dancefloor even if some are really difficult to be played. But the BPM is not the priority side at all. It's just like another [piece of] information.

Mark: Does the band control the cover graphics?

Patrick: Yeah, it's one of the major ideas of the concept of Front 242. In the beginning, we were obliged to produce our albums; we were doing our own sleeves and songs in the home studio. And since that time, we've never changed. We're trying to control everything, so when we come into the label office, we just give [them] a package with the cover, sleeve, the production, the songs, the masters, the press book is already done by the band, the T-shirts, the posters...anything we can do, we do ourselves.

Mark: The original press book for one of your early singles is still at the station. It doesn't name anyone in the band, it doesn't say anything about them, it just makes statements without backing anything.

Patrick: That's on purpose, I should say, because the band likes to create reactions but is absolutely not a judge of what's happening. We really don't feel like missionaries. We like to just get people's reactions.

Andrew: How do you choose them? What materials do you try to get reactions from?

Patrick: We're trying to find modern material—I mean, actualities. If you take an obvious subject, like the tele-evangelist of "Welcome to Paradise", for instance, sometimes we try to be more subtle and just take a few samples from the information and get them in the song because it doesn't have to be obvious all the time. We like to try to work on the consciousness and the sub-consciousness of the people.

Andrew: Do you research all this stuff a lot or is it more of an instant reaction where you hear this tele-evangelist and you want it in a song?

Patrick: No, the libraries are very big. They're huge, actually. For like a hundred samples, we can only use ten of them on a record. So it's really a selection of a bigger work.

Mark: Where does the sample "Hey poor, you don't have to be poor anymore" [in "Welcome to Paradise"] come from?

Patrick: It's from one of the tele-evangelists. I don't know which one especially. We just take a lot of samples but all the samples don't fit into the song like that. If the guy was saying, "Hey poor, NOW you don't have to be poor anymore," just the single "now" will make it, maybe, too long to get it in the sequence, so that's why there's a selective work on all those samples. They have to be powerful and they have to fit in the song. [Our samples] are a melting pot of those guys, they all say the same kinds of things.

Andrew: What attracted you to those samples?

Patrick: The power of the words. I must say, I don't know if it's positive or negative, but what's really interesting is that for a few years, religion was just going down, and those guys understood that the media could be powerful for religion. And they're very good in their speech; they know what to say and when to say it. We are interested in the power of their slogans.

Andrew: But it's just to get money.

Patrick: Of course. But the power of their sentence is something interesting and the music for the ear—that they get money with—it doesn't have anything to do with the record.

Andrew: Is that where you get a lot of your information, from watching TV?

Patrick: Yeah.

Mark: Is that Belgian TV or do you get American TV?

Patrick: There is a Belgian TV but [it] is known to be very intensive.

Mark: You can pick up TV from England and France.

Patrick: And America. We can get American channels.

IT'S ALL ABOUT POWER

Photos by P. Carley



Andrew: You can get Russian too, can't you?

Patrick: Sometimes, but through the Germans. It's possible. All European TVs do, anyway, is sometimes buy American series, so you have the American one. But we consider the TV as being the symbol of this century. Again: don't judge, don't say if it's good or bad. It's one of the symbols, and it's for sure a very interesting noisebox. And when we speak about TV, we're also interested in the media propaganda systems, as in how things are shown. The manner in which the news is presented in the '80s is totally different from the '70s. Why? Because spirits have changed, because people have changed. It just works with more flash.

Mark: How do you feel about the British press picking up on you guys right now—after Acid House, comes New Beat.

Patrick: We think it's very funny, because we think they didn't understand anything about the band. I personally feel that they're afraid to not mention the band when the band's just growing because they're afraid they'll miss something, but it doesn't mean they understand what's happening. Some journalists are very interested. But in general, I think they needed a name for the New Beat and they just took the first Belgian band because New Beat is Belgian and they decided this Belgian band should be the New Beat leader. That's how the English press reacts. And I think it's just a big joke.

Mark: Would you class yourselves, then, with

any other Belgian bands or is that just the British press classifying you?

Patrick: No. I think to classify people is typically a journalist's reaction. We don't need any classification. We're doing our job, we're trying to reach a certain quality, that's our musical work.

Andrew: A lot of your images are associated with right-wing politics. You have said a million times that you don't approve or disapprove, you're just trying to get reactions.

Patrick: The right-wing, the political right-wing? We don't feel any relationship with any political movement, because we're promoting a logo. We're just Front 242, and our domain is music. If we wanted to do politics, maybe we will use our music one day, but I don't think it's the point at the moment.

Andrew: I understood that, but it's just the fact that it constantly comes up.

Patrick: It comes up because it's a power view of our world. That's it, and

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POWER

WE'RE TRYING
TO REFLECT
WHAT'S HAPPENING
IN OUR WORLD.

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we work with what's happening. "We're trying to reflect what's happening in our world. Some people say, "You're kind of fascist." But *everybody* knows that fascist symbols are strong, that fascist propaganda was strong. So what we do is, we just recycle it—without the contents, but the symbols are still strong. They're still there. (Mark clears his throat)

Patrick: That's playing with fire. (laughs)

Mark: How do you think your audience reacts then?

Patrick: In Europe, you will find very hard political lines. Skinheads on one side of the stage, yuppies on the other, and kind of punk guys in the middle. It's less like that in the States.

We like the reactions, any kind of reaction—power—between what's happening on the stage and on the whole.

Andrew: The graphics on your logo are very slick, but they also have a homemade quality to them.

Mark: Like the computer graphics were made a couple of years ago.

Andrew: Do you keep it on for some reason? Was it made on a computer?

Patrick: Yeah, it was made on a computer. We know that with the new graphic computers and the high resolutions, you can just make a logo perfectly like any other graphic work. But that's not the point because it doesn't symbolize the computer anymore at that point.

So what we are obliged to do is go into a vulgar way, on purpose, and just accentuate the facts. I don't think it's a great art logo, but it's efficient because it's really vulgar, it's really going into the idea of what a computer is.

Andrew: So computers are one of your items to which you react, as a symbol of our century?

Patrick: Yes. We're not slaves of them, not at all. But we have to admit that if you go to a bank, you will be in front of a computer. You can go to even some hairdresser working with computers...it's just everywhere. But we're really not afraid of that, we're just living with it. We're not paranoid about it.

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"It's a warm, moist hall that invites you
in to spend the night."

Mark F.

Watch for date and time in the Reader.

De La Soul's history on vinyl began last summer with "Plug Tunin'", on Tommy Boy Records. Their new lp "3 Feet High and Rising" has moved Jimmys and Jennys everywhere one step closer to the Daisy Age. They have been described as everything from hippies to acid rap (no, not house music) to new wave rap. But they'll tell you they're none of those things. To quote from their biography, "Now you're dealing with an odd number consisting of Posdnuos (Plug One), a twiggler lover truly above the sync; Trugoy the Dove (Plug Two), a yogurt-eating pioneer of a phrase called talk. Last but not least, Pasemaster Mase (Plug Three), a technician who fiends for ketchup, preferably Heinz." **WHPK's** supreme team, **Chilly Q, JP Chill and Icebox**, spoke with Trugoy the Dove, Posdnuos and PA Pasemaster Mase after their recent show in Chicago.

Q: Can you tell us something about the daisy age?

Dove: The daisy age is the name of our production and the name of an age that we think we are living in right now. "DA" represents the word "t-h-e, the", the "I" is "inner", "S" is "sound" and "Y" is "y'all". So, it's "The Inner Sound Y'all", the sound from within, everything that we bring from the inside out.

Pos: It's the age of everything we're doing is coming from within. And what we mean by that is simply that we're not copying from anyone. We're not trying to be a [Big Daddy] Kane, a KRS-One, a Chuck D; we're just simply dealing with the music that we know. And we're saying that this is the age that everyone should be at because it's very competitive out there. If you don't have something of your own essence in your music, then it's kind of hard for you to come off. So that's what the Daisy Age is all means, coming from within.

Q: So where did you get this hippie label we keep hearing about?

Pos: The media, that's the media. It happened from our first stage show. We explained already what the Daisy Age means, so we had girls on stage throw daisies into the crowd. We would tell people, "The Inner Sound Y'all, this is all about the inner sound y'all," and the girls would throw daisies in the crowd. They also would hold cue cards which I guess reminded them of a thing that Bob Dylan did back in the '60s. So it all happened right then and there, visually, when they saw that. The next day, we were in write-ups labeled as hippies.

Q: Where was your first show at?

Pos: In Manhattan, it was a place called the Milky Way.

JP: That's amazing, I was lucky enough to see that show.

Q: What kind of music were you into before you started making rap?

Pos: All types of music. Of course, my main preference was rap and, you know, R&B. I really got hip to all the big rock groups through the fact that I had MTV. So I started to listen to a lot of rock and metal, all types of music, especially when you're into rap with the whole sampling thing. You always want to find something different [to sample] so you start looking in places where no one would look. I must say—being in rap and the whole sampling thing—it's brought in my mind to appreciate a lot of artists that I never would have even thought about.

THE OTHERS FROM A BROTHER PLANET



Q: That's what they say, rap brings back old records.

Pos: It really does. Where we live, "Me, Myself and I" is doing so well that the original "Knee Deep" is in regular rotation on radio [De La Soul sample parts of Funkadelic's "Knee Deep" in "Me, Myself and I"].

Q: Tell us what you do as far as writing credits for records you sample.

Pos: I feel that everyone should get proper credit. We made sure we discussed that with our record company. All the records we sample from—Steely Dan, Cymande, Mad Lads...

JP: Multiplication Rock?

Pos: Yeah. We discussed it with our lawyer. If we took [sampled] a considerable amount more than the measures that we usually ask to take by law, we make sure that people got the proper credit.

Q: That's kind of different for rap.

Ice: Doesn't it make it difficult to make a record to have to go through all those lawyers?

Pos: I must say, that's probably the slowest process because of the fact that there's a lot of lawyers and they don't know too much about sampling and they really take their time. Tommy Boy will send it over to Donald Fagan's lawyers [Fagan wrote "Peg", a Steely Dan song De La Soul used in "Eye Know"] and they're like, "What is this about?" So that was the longest thing to get out of the way, the whole Steely Dan project. But as far as sampling is concerned, we try to be as creative as possible with it and we know from a lot of artists that we sample from, they appreciate what we've done with it. I feel that even if the artist is not too happy about the whole sampling thing, at least they can say, "This person didn't destroy my art. At least they did something creative with it."

Q: And usually it's dead records you would use anyway, dead as far as the industry is concerned.

Pos: Hopefully they appreciate it and with us, we've gotten a great amount of respect from the people whose records we used.

JP: Are you surprised at the incredible response you've gotten because the first response of a lot of people here was that some of your stuff was sort of silly, like [the lyric], "three is the magic number"?

Pos: The album hit people from all different directions. The humor grabbed some people, the different kind of lyrics and style of rap, the cartoon. There were a lot of things that were just not normally done by other rappers. A lot of other rappers we know are very humorous but they feel when they get in front of

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their crowd, they have this image they have to protect or live up to. When we were going through the process of making this album and getting to know a lot of rappers, they were like, "You know, I wanted to use that, but it didn't fit my style." With us, we feel that there's nothing that we're limited to, nothing we couldn't use or try to do. That's what I like about we're all about. It's not one set image or something that we're under; so it's not like we can't do this or that. We practically do what we choose.

Ice: Your style is any style you want.

Pos: Yeah, our style is unlimited.

Q: So you don't make your music with deliberate intentions, like, "we want this to cross over, we want this to..."

Pos: Basically, there's like 23 cuts on the album and we actually had about 30. We presented it all to Tommy Boy and they loved everything. But, of course, they looked at "Eye Know" and said, "This is gonna be real big, 'Say No Go' is gonna be very crossoverish." And with a lot of cuts that were really underground, like "Plug Tunin'", they said, "Well, you can hold off on that." We had no intentions of "Eye Know" being what it is except for the fact that we loved the music and we just tried to do the best with the sample that we did.

Q: How long have you guys been rapping?

Pos: I've been rapping for ten years, ever since sixth grade.

Q: And how long have you been together as a group?

Dove: Almost five years.

Q: How different was your material then from what you have now?

Dove: Probably no different. We've always been the same even back when we weren't in music and in school. We always dressed different, spoke different, carried ourselves different from everybody else. In high school, me and Pos and Mase were different. We dressed different, we took our fathers' pants and hemmed 'em up. We wore plaids and polka dots and all that stuff.

We wore
plaids and
polka dots
and all
that stuff.

We made up
our own
language in
high school.

People
couldn't really
understand
what we
were
saying.

Stetsasonic, the Jungle Brothers. Aside from rap, we looked up to people's styles: Loose Enz, Tracy Chapman, Parliament/Funkadelic. So it was more than just rap that wasn't our influence, but our idols.

JP: How did you hook up with the Jungle Brothers?

Pos: It was the night before we were gonna do a show together in Boston. We were at this club called Hotel Amazon. They introduced themselves and we introduced ourselves just as far as preparing to do a show together the next day. After the show, we got to know each other a little better, exchanged numbers,





THIS IS YOUR BLOODY VALENTINE

In today's rhythm-dominated pop music, there are, fortunately, still British (and American) bands which insist on using melody. **My Bloody Valentine** (Creation/Relativity) is one of them. But whereas they relied much on vocal melodies in the past, they are now taking care to create a looser pattern in their music, allowing the tune to flow from that source, moved along by their distinctive heavy sound. They performed at the Cabaret Metro recently to support the domestic release of their latest album, "Isn't Anything". **WHPK's Mark Josephson** and **Mae Lum** spoke with them in the Smart Bar, located downstairs from the main stage. A band of contrasts, their lethargical manners misrepresent the hard work and intelligence they apply to get good music across to their audiences. While **Kevin Shields** (guitar, vocals) did most of the talking, **Billinda Jayne Butcher** (guitar, vocals), **Debbie Googe** (bass) and **Colm O'Ciosoigh** (drums) listened in and occasionally contributed to the conversation.

Mae: Are you afraid of being pigeonholed into having a certain sort of sound to your music?

Kevin: We've always been pigeonholed.

Mae: I realize you're being compared to the obvious bands.

Kevin: We always were, to other bands.

It depends on what bands are popular at the time. It depends on what people think we're influenced by.

Mark: What's the latest pigeonholing going on now?

Kevin: The latest ones are Sonic Youth and Dinosaur Jr. Last time it was the Jesus and Mary Chain.

Mae: Does that really piss you off?

Kevin: No, because it's usually worse for them than it is for us, because we tend to progress more than they do. The other bands, like the Jesus and Mary Chain, musically, they've sort of fallen by the wayside. They're not seen as leaders and now people think that we're doing something different. So it's bad for them to be compared to us, because compared to them, we're supposed to be a second-rate version but a lot of people think that we're doing a lot more interesting stuff.

Mark: Just listening to your sound check, I can tell where the Dinosaur Jr. comparison comes from. Do you listen to a lot of '70s album rock-type of stuff?

Kevin: Never. I never listen to anything. I mean, I don't know... the Dinosaur thing is a total coincidence because I like Dinosaur. But before we ever heard a Dinosaur record, the qualities for which people compare us to Dinosaur were already there. The basic idea of sort of fragile-type melodies but kind of heavy music, that's basically where they get the Dinosaur thing from. We've always been

like that, even before Dinosaur made a record. It doesn't bother us. We like Dinosaur.

Mark: It seems there's a quantum leap in your sound between the stuff you did for Lazy and the stuff you're doing on Creation, even though you seem to get common elements in both.

Mae: Listening to your stuff in chronological order, there does seem to be a natural progression, although the sound now is much looser. Are you happier with that?

Kevin: Yeah. That's what we're striving for, really. What we found in the studio is that usually, things are too tight and controlled, and that a success is when it's very easygoing-sounding.

Mae: More melodic? More rhythmic, perhaps?

Kevin: Not really rhythmic. It's just loose, you know. We don't mind groovy beats, we use them. They're tight, but they're more sort of moving along. We don't like stiff-sounding music.

Mae: So the music of the '60s hasn't influenced you that much?

Kevin: Not as much people think, no. We went through a phase of listening to it. We've always liked the Beatles, right? But we've never really listened to the Rolling Stones or anything. We've listened to the Byrds and the Beatles. At the same time, I've enjoyed Husker Du more, bands like that.

Mae: A lot of British bands have hooked up to that sound.

Kevin: I think it's because people want to play rock music that's based on melodic folk, as opposed to playing rock music that's influenced by blues. So if you play folk-type rock music, everyone goes, "Ah, the '60s." But the whole concept of melodic folk music has nothing to do with the '60s. It existed a long time before the '60s. And the '60s don't own rock music, either. So if you play melodic music and use some folk-type harmonies or something, and use some folk-type chords, and you play it in an aggressive rock way, and you've experimented with it and you go on, yeah, you're a '60s-type band, you know. As an era, it probably had the best music, but I think the '80s and the '90s will be, maybe, really good in the end. There's a lot of good music coming out nowadays, a lot of diverse music. Probably more diverse than it was in the '60s.

Mark: Lazy's reissued some of your older stuff [an album called "Wine and Ecstasy", originally released in 1987]. Did you guys have anything to do with that at all?

Kevin and Billinda: No.

Mae: Did you know about it beforehand?

Kevin: They asked us, but we said no, we definitely don't want it out. They just went ahead and did it. We said, we'll take you to court and they said, good. Anything that we can put up money-wise for our lawyers, they'll double it, you know. So they just wanted to fight, because basically they don't like us.

Mae: They don't like you?

Kevin: Oh no, not at all.

Mae: Is it because they've lost you now, that they're not going to make any money on your new success?

Kevin: Well, they never really had us. There was never a contract or anything. They just paid for the recording. So that gave them the right to own them, which is really typical of the music business.

Mark: Did you have anything to do with the records when they came out?

Kevin: "Strawberry Wine" [EP] and the "Ecstasy" album, we designed the covers. We did [them]. They were our records, but we weren't even happy with the "Ecstasy" album particularly, when it came out because the pressing was really, really bad.

Mark: I've never seen one of those. I have a copy of "Strawberry Wine" and it seems okay.

Kevin: Yeah, it was okay except there was a pop on most of them, on the B-side. And the B-side was also pressed slightly off-center. It was really annoying.

The quality in general of most of the stuff they put out was really bad.

Mae: Is the reissue better?

Kevin: No, it's worse. If you listen to it, there's a semblance of scratching. On the tape, there wasn't anything like that. It sounds terrible.

Mark: Do you have a copy of the tape so that if you wanted to do an issue on Creation that sounded nice, could you do it?

Kevin: Well, they own the tape, so that's the problem. I mean, you hate that, you know. Someday, we're going to do something about it when we can. We took all the necessary legal steps, so we're all set up to sue, basically, when we have the money, when we can afford to.

Mark: As soon as the American tour is over.

Billinda: We're losing money on it.

Mae: You put out a record in 1984 called "This is Your Bloody Valentine". Was that available only in Berlin?

Kevin: In Germany, yeah. That was the first record we had, and that was a different band. The first record by this lineup is "Strawberry Wine". But My Bloody Valentine existed before that, with a different singer. And also different other members in the band.

Mark: Is anybody who's sitting here in that band?

Kevin: Yeah, me and Colm. And Debbie was in.

Debbie: Like part 2.

Kevin: Yeah, there were one, two, three... three different stages of the band. Sort of with different people.

Debbie: We've had three EPs [before the present lineup].

Kevin: Yeah, we had the "Geek" EP, another one called "The New Record", and another one called "Sunny Sunday Smile".

Mark: What labels were they on, or did you put these out yourself?

Kevin: One was on Fever Records, one was on...

Debbie: Kaleidoscope Sound.

Kevin: ...and the last one was on Lazy. But we own the tapes to the last one, because we paid for it.

Mae: Do you primarily work in the studio, or do you come in with a preconceived notion of what you're going to do that day?

Billinda: Not that much is thought out in advance. Maybe a few days in advance at the most. Kevin does the music side, but mostly comes up with the ideas for the songs.

Mae: (to Kevin): Which do you find harder to write, the music or the lyrics?

Kevin: I suppose, the lyrics. It used to be the lyrics, definitely, but now I'm not

sure. It's as difficult as we make it. (crackling sound as Debbie opens a bag)

Kevin: There's going to be a lot of Debbie's noise on the tape.

Mae: Is that tobacco?

Debbie: Oh, sorry.

Mark: Do you tend to record live in the studio or do you have tons and tons of overdubs, and it takes a long time to get something done?

Kevin: It's not really tons and tons of overdubs, it's just that each part is done separately because each part is made up separately. It's usually only just a couple of guitar tracks, and a bass, and a couple of vocals.

Mark: So you're definitely not the kind of band that would just throw something down and say, that's fine.

Billinda and Kevin: No.

Mark: Do you call yourselves perfectionists then?

Kevin: No, we can't afford to be perfectionists, because it's difficult.

Mark: Has the Creation deal worked out the way you wanted it to?

Kevin: Pretty much. No record company is ever beyond getting their ass kicked. They all need to be constantly put in a position where they have to work hard.

Mae: But [Alan] McGee [president of Creation] is not the kind of guy who will yell at you if you haven't done much work in the studio.

Kevin: No, not really. But he's probably the kind of person who will just lose interest. It's like he's got a really short attention span.

Mark: Are you happy with the job Creation's been doing with you at any rate?

Mae: Promoting you, and so forth?

Kevin: It's been okay. It's going to have to be a lot better in the future. It's just that at the moment, it's been okay.

Mae: You mean you anticipate being more popular so therefore, they have to show more support for you or do more for you.

Kevin: Well, to be more popular, we gotta have things like... I mean, the quality of the actual records and tapes, at one point, were really bad. You know, stuff like that. We make half the sales on cassettes, and the cassettes were terrible. That's their side of the job, making the product properly. You know what I mean? They're going to have to get that together, and they are getting that together now. And promotion in general, like letting people know the record's out—Creation as a label is used to letting word-of-mouth be the main strength, which is good, but in a way, you

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VALENTINE

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can only go so far with word-of-mouth. Basically, we're quite happy with the situation there.

Mae: Were you excited when *Relativity* decided to distribute your album *Stateside*?

Kevin: No, excited...well. We would have had a record out here anyway. Homestead particularly was really interested [for] a long time. We've always had some sort of label interested in us. Homestead liked "Strawberry Wine". We met them one time.

Mae: You've put out a lot of records over the past two years on *Creation*, what with the album and the two EPs.

Kevin: It's just been a year, yeah.

Mae: It all came pretty quickly. Do you put pressure on yourselves to do this consciously, or do you feel like you just want to put out everything you've done?

Kevin: Well, we just did. We put out what we put out, you know, at the time. We wanted to have a record out in April, which never happened, because the stuff we did in January, we didn't think was good enough. [It] isn't the first time it's happened; it happened with the album ["Isn't Anything"]. We recorded half the album and then we just thought, "Ah, it isn't good enough," and so we re-recorded the other half. So half was recorded at one time and half at another time. [We thought the first half] was good enough to be on the album but not good enough to be on the whole album. We needed to have a balance, we needed for the stuff to have a certain standard.

Mae: You didn't want two hit songs and the rest of the stuff to be filler.

Kevin: No, all the songs are important. Whether we make an EP or an album, the way we want it to be is that each song has something for it on its own. They're not second-rate versions of other things we do.

Mae: Of the formulas that've brought you success.

Kevin: We do develop formulas 'cause you can't help it. Especially because we do quite a few different kinds of music, so you start to see patterns in things but really, each thing has to be special on its own.

Mae: I imagine it's harder because you do your own production.

Kevin: Yeah, it is. I wouldn't pretend that it isn't hard.

Mark: Let me ask the cliché question:

is it just as much fun for you now as when you just started?

Kevin: Yeah. When we first started, it was like...yeah, it is.

Mae: You like standing up on stage and playing your guitar?

Kevin: Oh, I always felt funny about that. Unfortunately, it hasn't gone away. No, it's not delightful. I just do it, I don't know why. It's just putting the music across, you know.

Mae: In what way is "Isn't Anything" an expression of your love for music? What does it mean to be "on the inside", to have this music click with some people?

Kevin: You just have to make music that you really like, that you really personally love. If you really like it personally, then there's a good chance that someone else is going to really like it too. If you don't, if you create music to create a product,

We don't want
people's opinions
to affect what we do.
We want to be
independent
of other people.

then there's a good chance that people will sense it and won't like it too much. I think that's why a vast majority of bands don't get anywhere and don't do anything, and people don't really like them.

Mae: So it's your passion that comes through, and people respond to that.

Kevin: Yeah. It's not sort of passionate and all that, it's not sort of "you too"-ish, but it's true. Basically, if you do something that you like and you really genuinely like what you do, there's a good chance that other people will really like it as well.

Mae: With songs like "I Don't Need No Trust" or "Drive It All Over Me", it seems like your songs are a personal thing, that a one-to-one relationship is what you're focussing on. Or am I reading you all wrong?

Kevin: (emphatically) No. It's partly just because we found that none of us are writers. And the easier way to write is from personal experience; it's the only thing you can say, "Yeah, this is real," and no one can come back at you and say this is a lot of crap because you know it's real and you know you believe in it so it

doesn't matter what anyone says.

Mae: Are you afraid of being second-guessed then, or told that you're wrong?

Kevin: We don't want people's opinions to affect what we do. We want to be independent of other people. I mean, when you're writing lyrics just for the sake of the poetic sound of them only, and reading books and writing about books and things, you know, people can just go, this is sh— garbage, you know. But if you're writing about something that you know is real, it doesn't matter if people will call it garbage, because it'll just mean that they don't know what they're talking about. Because you know it's real anyway.

Mae: But it's not the standard kind of relationship song, such as those which populate the Top 40.

Billinda: It's not your boy-meets-girl kind of thing.

Kevin: Top 40 music isn't even boy-meets-girl, anyway. Most of it is sort of boy-meets-boy. English Top 40 music is anyway, that's for sure. Most of that kind of stuff is just garbage anyway. I mean, we *know* it's garbage.

Billinda: Most of the subjects, although they're personal, are universal anyway. I mean, sex is a universal subject. Whatever your personal experiences are, probably somebody else has had that experience as well.

Mae: Have you finished your new record yet? Is "Sugar" [a flexidisc song included with the February issue of *The Catalogue*, a British independent music trade publication] going to be on it?

Kevin: No. It was a pity it wasn't better recorded. The pressing is terrible. You know, it's because the actual record is a flexidisc... The music was recorded like it might have sounded okay on a record but on a flexidisc, it sounds pretty awful. We did it specially, and did it really cheaply.

Mae: I like the way the drums sound like a heart beating on "Sugar" (turning toward Colm).

Kevin: Yeah, Colm planned it all out. (Colm smiles quietly)

Mae: So what about the new record?

Kevin: We've been recording since January. We've got six songs done. [After the tape stopped rolling, Billinda stated that the record release was planned for September] We haven't found something that we'd want to put out as our next single.

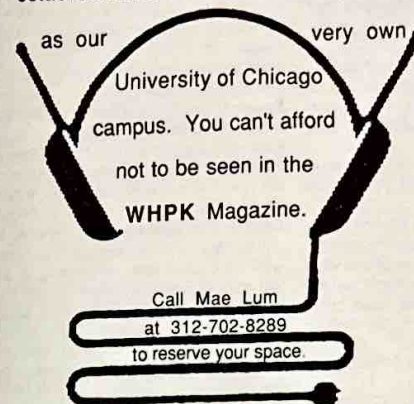
Mark: How much do you tour when you're back at home?

Debbie: We actually do tend to tour, and then stop, and then do another tour.

Kevin: Let me put it this way: we

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PLANET

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Mase: Paul is like seasoning. He spices up what we make, whatever we come up with.

Pos: We're more of a collaboration. We do things to an equal proportion. That's why a lot of things he does with Stets sound totally different from us.

JP: It seems that lately some of the most innovative stuff has been coming out of Long Island instead of other places in New York. Like you or Public Enemy, or Rakim and Eric B. Why do you think that is?

Pos: I don't know. Basically it's just the fact that when the first couple of kids from Long Island got recognition, it gave a lot of other people a boost. At one point, it seemed like a lot of stuff was coming out of Brooklyn, then a lot of the people started coming out of Queens, like Run-DMC, Salt-N-Pepa, L.L. When one person makes it in an area, it just gives a lot of other people the motivation to strive and keep going. So I guess that what's happening in Long Island. I notice in our town, Amityville, with us finally doing something, it's given other kids motivation.

Q: Why does it seem that you have flipped off all the tradition, or what would be considered tradition or routine for rappers, you know, gold chains, the fresh gear?

Dove: One of the reasons is because it's routine. Another reason is because you find a lot of people just mimicking other people because they're wearing it. One thing that we don't like is fads: people wearing something because of the fact that someone else does. We don't wear gold chains not because of that, but we don't wear gold chains because we don't choose to.

Mase: It's a waste of my money.

Dove: We don't wear the sweat suits and stuff like that because we don't choose to. One of the big problems with gold is that everybody's getting their gold snatched. Working so hard for a \$3,000 chain and your getting it snatched. I don't need nobody rippin' no chain off my neck.

Q: You talked about the violence, the chain snatching. How bad is it in New York? I see the clubs are closed, there's not a lot of outlets for hip-hop.

Dove: It's bad.

Mase: It kind of simmered down because there's no more clubs. A lot of brothers aren't wearing that much jewelry

no more.

Pos: People from out of New York are starting to copy what people in New York are doing. Like yesterday, we were in Cleveland and people were bumrushing others, just rushing through people and snatching gold. So maybe it might get worse somewhere else than what it is in New York.

Mase: The biggest problem now is the drug scene.

Q: That's everywhere, we have that here.

Mase: Nuke 'em!

Q: Nuke the dope man. One last question. If you had a message to give to kids that are trying to make it, what advice would you give anybody trying to make it in this music now?

Mase: For me, keep striving for what you're trying to do and just show originality in what you do.

Dove: For me, it would be the same thing. All the ideas you have inside your head, don't be afraid to show people what you're thinking about. It might be the same old thing inside your head but it might be brand new to them. So don't be afraid to voice your opinion.

Mase: And stay in school. I'm busting my ass to finish high school.

Dove: Another thing besides all the creativity, which lets you get hooked up, you got to know about the business too. A lot of people just look at the outside and the glamour of things but it's not all about that. You can be the best thing, the slammest thing out there, but if you don't know about the business, you'll get jerked, took to the bank, so you gotta be up on having a lawyer, accountants, the whole nine.

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VALENTINE

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haven't had more than three weeks at any given time since last June, for a year now, of doing nothing. It's not like we've had only three weeks off; we've had three weeks here and there, but never more. It's always something—in the studio or else touring.

Mae: What do you see yourselves doing two years from now?

Kevin: Probably doing this, hopefully.

Debbie: The years just fly by anyway.

Kevin: Years go by. I hope we'll make a third album, a proper album. The next album has to be really good and the next album after that has to be even better. Do you know what I mean? We have to do that. When we get through that, [then] we'll think about what we're going to do. We have to make two more albums that are really good. We're not going to put them out unless they're good.

Mae: The public is merciless; once you hit a slump, they'll drop you like a hot potato.

Mark: At least the NME [British music weekly] will. They'll drop you the week after you come out.

Kevin: The English press is all business and politics. But musical taste doesn't have an awful lot to do with it. It has something to do with it, but not an awful lot. Developing in London, you get to know the journalists that develop as well around the same time as the bands, and they don't last as long. The journalists will go before the band will go. We've outlasted whole staffs at papers. In three years' time, there's a good chance that we'll still be around doing well, you know, doing what we want to do still. But half the people that criticize us will be doing something else. That's why there's no point in caring about them anymore. I think music journalists are...

(crashing sound in the background as plastic garbage cans are thrown down the stairs into the Smart Bar)

Mae: I'm sorry, what were you saying? Music journalists are very...

Mark: They're very bouncy, and they make a lot of noise.

Kevin: I'm saying that a lot of them won't do it forever, anyway. What I'm saying really is that it doesn't matter what the press thinks of us. Because even though they've given us tons of good press, basically they like us because they like the records, not because they think we're part of a hip new trend.

WHPK MAGAZINE #12 DISCOGRAPHY

Edward Wilkerson, Jr.

Selected list:

The Ethnic Heritage Ensemble (with Kahil El Zabar and "Light" Henry Huff) — *3 Gentlemen from Chicago* (Moers Music)
Eight Bold Souls — *s/t* (Sessoms)
Shadow Vignettes — *Birth of a Notion* (Sessoms)
The Ethnic Heritage Ensemble (with Kahil El Zabar and Joseph Bowie) — *Live in Stockholm* (Storyville/Silkheart)

My Bloody Valentine

"This is Your Bloody Valentine" (mini-lp) (Dossier)
"Geek" (ep) (Fever)
"No Place to Go" (single) (Fever)
"The New Record by My Bloody Valentine" (mini-lp) (Kaleidoscope Sound)
"Sunny Sunday Smile" (ep) (Lazy)
"Ecstasy" (mini-lp) (Lazy)
"Strawberry Wine" (ep) (Lazy)
"Ecstasy and Wine" (lp) (Lazy)
"You Made Me Realise" (mini-lp) (Creation)
"Feed Me With Your Kiss" (ep) (Creation)
"Isn't Anything" (lp) (Creation/Relativity)
"Sugar" (flexidisc single) (Creation/The Catalogue)
"Soft as Snow (But Warm Inside)" (mini-lp) (Creation/Relativity)

De La Soul

All releases on Tommy Boy Records:

"Plug Tunin'" / "Freedom of Speak" / "Strictly Dan Stukie" (ep)
"Jennifa (Taught Me)" / "Potholes in My Lawn" / "Skip to My Loop" (ep)
"Me, Myself and I" / "It Ain't Hip to be Labeled a Hippie" / "Brainwashed Follower" (ep)
"3 Feet High and Rising" (lp)
"Say No Go" (ep)

Front 242

Domestic releases all on Wax Trax!

Geography (lp/cd)
"Endless Riddance" (ep)
No Comment (lp)
"Politics of Pressure" (ep)
Back Catalogue (cassette/cd only)
"Interception" (ep)
Official Version (lp/cassette/cd)
"Masterhit" (ep)
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